

Lives of the saints

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



In Shakespeare's Hamlet and Nino Ricci's Lives of the Saints both demonstrate different visions of women. Comparing weak and indecisive women in Hamlet as to strong and independent women in Lives of the Saints. Ophelia in Hamlet is characterized many times as a weak women especially in the quote, " frailty thy name is woman. " She is completely dependent on her father and proves her dependence when she acts cruel to Hamlet. Which goes against her true feelings toward Hamlet. Afterwards Ophelia agrees to not see Hamlet anymore, " I shall obey my lord. " Which shows Polonius's control over his daughter. Ophelia's actions show that she will do anything to please her father, even making a personal sacrifice which she doesn't agree with. Ophelia's desire to please her father leads her to be used as a puppet in order for the King and Polonius to spy on Hamlet, Ophelia's willingness to spy on a person she truly loves, shows her true nature toward her father. Even when Hamlet harasses Ophelia and tells her to go to a nunnery, Ophelia had the inability to defend herself. When her father passes on, Ophelia is left by herself, with no one to give her guidance. Instead of trying to move on with her life, she calls for her brother hoping he will have a plan for her, " My brother shall know of it and so I thank you for your good counsel. " Polonius's was irreplaceable and finally Ophelia realizes this " I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died. "The significance of the violets are that they symbolize faithfulness and they all died because she felt useless without her father. Ophelia's death is in result of her dependence and weakness of character. Overall, Ophelia goes mad because she has no position in society. Men have continuously ordered her around, used her, pulling her mind in every

direction. She put her faith in one person and never made her own decisions. Similar to Ophelia is Gertrude. She is also characterized by the quote, "frailty thy name is woman." Gertrude depends on her husband. Gertrude longing for the attention that she loses when her husband dies, quickly marries Claudius, her husband's brother. Shakespeare displays that women have no backbone and are weak. As if they could not live without others, men especially. Nino Ricci demonstrates a whole different side of women, he shows that women are strong and independent. The character that illustrates these qualities is Cristina, she raised her child Vittorio alone. Unlike the women in Hamlet, Cristina didn't need a man to help her raise her child or to get through life. When her son gets beat up at school, she doesn't just ignore it. She takes physical action about the situation "I'll make her pay for this, Vittorio, you'll see, by the blood of Christ I'll make her pay. The wiping at some tears in her own eyes, she took me suddenly by the hand and marched me out the door into the street. (107)." Cristina is defiantly not a pushover and stands up for what she believes in. She lives in a village where the women stay at home and the men work out in the field and everyone believed in strange superstitions. Cristina was against her village's expectations and went against what everyone thought. Cristina is outspoken and self-assured. She has a feminist point of view and is very confident in it, she says "He's probably slept with every whore in America by now, but for me it's a disgrace. (154)". Cristina is explaining about her husband Mario but it is also a statement in general about men. Guys can go around going from girl to girl to girl and it's not a problem. But if a woman were to do the same thing, even if it was just with one guy it's an absolute disgrace. This book was

based in 1960 and the same sentence could apply to 2012. Also has significance to the text because she had an affair and the whole town found out, which then they treated her with disgust. Cristina also states “ Women have had their faces up their asses for too long, they let their men run around like goats and then they’re happy if they don’t come home and beat them! (154)” It is demeaning that women are seen as whores when they have affairs, especially when its said by other women. They’re oppressing their own gender when saying it. She finally decides to move away and says her final words to the village “ You are the ones who are dead, not me, because not one of you knows what it means to be free and to make a choice, and I pray to God that he wipes this town and all its stupidities off the face of the earth! (184)” Most women wouldn’t have spoke there mind, especially a woman like Ophelia or Gertrude. Cristina constantly fought with her father and always disagreed “ Long arguments were carried on daily between kitchen and bedroom, tension hovering around.(154). ” She finally got fed up with living with her father and hearing his opinion she said “ Then to hell with all of you! I’ll go to Rome, Naples, anywhere. ” She had the courage and strength to leave her father and start a life somewhere else, mean while Ophelia couldn't last a couple days with out her father and killed her self. Nino Ricci illustrates women to be outspoken, independent and powerful. In the end of each story both women characters die. The difference is the way they lived their life. Cristina at least lived her life, standing up for what she believe in and having her own opinion. As for Ophelia lived a lie, as she was a spineless imbecile always doing what others told her to do and

had a pathetic death. Shakespeare and Nino Ricci may have very different vision on women but at the same time they are both very accurate views.